

Testimony
Ken Huewitt
Interim President, Texas Southern University
Legislative Appropriations Request Hearing
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Mr. Chairman and Members,

Thank you all for the opportunity to appear this morning and discuss the Legislative Appropriations Request for Texas Southern University.

You all have our LAR, and I will direct your attention to certain elements of emergency importance. Our conversation will necessarily involve dollar signs and numbers, and my goal this morning is to put those in context.

Texas Southern University is a proud HBCU located in the heart of Houston. We serve a unique student population: Our students are primarily minorities, most of whom are the first members of their family to pursue Higher Education. They have all the skills and the will to earn their degree, but often need additional wrap-around student services to ensure their success. Basic needs such as transportation, digital devices, and functional housing are challenges for our students in any year, and especially within this past pandemic-stricken year.

Despite our challenges, Texas Southern University retains its bold vision: To be recognized by the excellence of our programs, the quality of our instruction, our innovative research, and our desire to be a contributing partner to our community, state, nation, and world.

First, look at our programs and instruction:

- TSU's law school offers an L.L.M. in Immigration and Naturalization Law; the first of its kind in the country.
- Texas Southern's Aviation program is an FAA accredited, full service degree program that trains diverse pilots of the next generation. [A recent study](#) showed that less than 20% of aircraft pilots are minorities, and we are doing our part to improve that number by training African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and women to be pilots. We also prioritize veterans for pilot training.
- Our pharmacy school is the number 1 producer of African-American pharmacists in Texas, and the number 3 producer of African American pharmacists in the country. 100% of our PhD students complete their dissertations within 5 years of study.

One example of the innovative nature of our research is our federal designation as a Beyond Traffic Innovation Center. This designation classifies TSU as a national leader in urban transportation planning. Texas' position as the number 1 state for business is reliant on our ability to move goods and commerce, and TSU is directly impacting that ability.

Finally, we wish to partner with the community, state, nation, and world by rising to the challenges that we face as a whole. We are doing that every day through our emergency COVID testing, test analysis, and vaccinations that are happening on campus as we speak.

Texas Southern University strives to be a point of access and a safe haven for our students and community at large. Through our familial atmosphere, supportive partnerships, and rigorous academics, we are contributing to the betterment of generations of underserved students. Individuals enter our campus as students and leave as proudly educated, productive contributors to our society.

Members, as a former CFO, I am certainly mindful of the difficult budget decisions you all are faced with each biennium.

I also recognize that COVID has tremendously exacerbated these difficulties.

At the same time, the Governor and many Members have made it clear that nothing is more important than protecting the lives of the citizens of Texas.

To that end, we have three exceptional items, all of which correlate with the priorities of our state leadership.

Item 1 will allow us to improve our state-of-the-art Coronavirus Recovery Hub.

Through our partnerships with St. Luke's Health and Thermo Fisher Scientific, we are currently vaccinating hundreds daily and will soon be testing and analyzing for other HBCUs in Texas. More importantly, we are vaccinating vulnerable, underserved populations within walking distance of our urban campus. This is part of our mission to serve.

Appropriations in accordance with Item 1 will allow us to continue to train medical professionals to respond to the current pandemic, as well as emerging challenges of the future.

Item 2 will assist with the state's 60/30 plan by increasing enrollment and housing opportunities, thereby increasing retention and graduation rates. Our vision is that students will live with peers of shared majors, surrounded by counselors, faculty,

and resources. They may not be able to call home for advice on the challenges that come with pursuing a college degree, so it is critical that our institution provide these additional support structures.

Deferred maintenance will also be addressed by Item 2. Our campus infrastructure and building foundations are untenable and in some cases, near condemnation. This maintenance cannot be deferred any longer because it hurts our ability to serve our students.

Item 3 is a request for technological upgrades that will help usher in this legislature's vision for expanded broadband access. With more of us working and learning from home than ever before, we cannot ignore our technological needs. All students deserve access to high-speed, high-quality internet and devices.

Committee members, with these funding requests, TSU can protect and improve countless lives. We look forward to partnering with the state of Texas to meet the needs of all Texans. I would also like to extend an open invitation to each of the committee members to visit our campus to see first-hand the positive contributions we are making to our state, country, and beyond.

Thank you for this opportunity; I welcome your questions.